UNITED
NATIONS

HRI

International
Human Rights
Instruments

Distr.
GENERAL

HRI/CORE/1/Add.87
17 February 1998

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

CORE DOCUMENT FORMING PART OF THE REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES

MALI

[2 April 1997]

GE.98-15325 (E)

I. LAND AND PEOPLE

A. Principal physical characteristics

1. Situated at the centre of west Africa, Mali is a huge country with no access to the sea. It is 1,241,238 km² in area and is surrounded by seven countries: Algeria to the north, Niger to the east, Burkina Faso to the south-east, Côte d'Ivoire to the south, Guinea (Conakry) to the south-west, Senegal to the west and Mauritania to the north-west.

2. Having no coast, Mali is dependent on the neighbouring countries which have access to the sea and port installations. The main routes to the coast are: Bamako-Abidjan (approximately 1,115 km) by road; Bamako-Dakar (approximately 1,250 km) by rail; and Bamako-Conakry (approximately 1,100 km) by road.

3. From south to north, 25 per cent of Mali's territory is in the Sudano-Guinean and Sudanian zone, 50 per cent in the Sahelian zone and 25 per cent in the Sahara desert.

4. Rainfall varies from one climatic zone to another. In the Sudano-Guinean zone the rainy season lasts over six months with an average rainfall of 1,300 to 1,500 mm, while in the Saharan zone, where rainfall is irregular, the annual average rarely exceeds 200 mm.

5. The terrain is relatively low-lying and flat. Mali is a country of plains and low plateaux, the average altitude being approximately 500 metres. Two main rivers flow through the southern and central part of Mali: the Niger (with 1,700 km of its course in Mali) and the Senegal (800 km in Mali). They have numerous tributaries, and there are lakes such as Lake Débo, Lake Faguibine and Lake Horo in the bend in the Niger.

6. Administratively, Mali is divided into eight regions and one district: Kayes, Koulikoro, Sikasso, Ségou, Mopti, Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal and the District of Bamako (the capital). The regions are divided into constituencies and arrondissements. The District of Bamako is divided into six communes.

B. Principal socio-demographic characteristics

7. As a veritable ethnic crossroads, Mali is a mosaic of peoples and a zone of contact between several civilizations. On the one hand, there are the resident farmers made up of the Bambara, Malinkes, Khassonkés, Songhais, Dogons, Sarakolés, Sénoufo, Minianka, Bobo and Toucouleurs, and on the other, nomadic herders made up of the Peulh, Tamasheq and Arab Moors and fishermen comprising Bozo, Somono and Sorko.

8. The contacts necessarily created by the sharing of the same land and the complementarity of agricultural, stockbreeding and fishing activities have over time created links of all kinds (matrimonial, cultural borrowings, "cousinhood", etc.), leading to a thorough intermingling of the country's different ethnic groups. This ethnic and cultural intermingling constitutes one of Mali's great assets.

9. The main religion is Islam, and there are also Catholics, Protestants and animists.

Demographic trends

10. During the colonial period, the precise demographic situation of the country was not known. The economic and social table for the overseas territories (1958) nevertheless gave a few numerical indications of the historical development of the population as a whole. Fertility and mortality rates and the intensity of migratory movements, which are important demographic characteristics, have remained unknown. There was a moderate increase in the population of Mali during the colonial period, from 2.5 million in 1921 to 3.7 million in 1956.

11. From 1960 the first scientific estimates of the population of Mali were carried out, thanks to the demographic survey organized in 1960/61. This survey revealed the principal characteristics which had hitherto been unknown. Between 1960 and 1976, the population of Mali increased from 4.1 million to 6.4 million, an average rate of increase of 2.82 per cent.

12. From 1976 to 1987 the total population rose from 6.4 million to 7.7 million, according to the results of the censuses conducted in 1976 and 1987, the population was estimated at 9,010,000 in 1995. The growth between censuses (1976-1987) was in the order of 1.81 per cent, while the natural growth rate is estimated at 3.7 per cent. It should be noted that Mali is a country of net emigration.

13. On the question of mortality, Mali, like other Sahelian and African countries, is confronted by problems of general infant and maternal mortality. The crude mortality rate dropped from 29 per 1,000 in 1960/61 to 18 per 1,000 in 1976 and 12.6 per 1,000 in 1987, while the infant mortality rate fell from 250 per 1,000 in 1960/61 to 120 per 1,000 in 1976 and 102.3 per 1,000 in 1987.

14. The second Malian Demographic and Health Survey (EDSM-II, 1995-1996) gave an infant mortality rate of 123 per 1,000, a juvenile mortality rate of 131 per 1,000 and an infant-juvenile mortality rate of 238 per 1,000.

15. The fertility level is among the highest in Africa. The maternal mortality rate is currently estimated at 1,000 for every 100,000 live births. The synthetic fertility index was 6.8 children per woman in 1987 and was estimated to be at the same level in 1995. Pregnancies - early, at short intervals and late - are numerous. The average spacing between births is less than 20 months and 33 per cent of births are to women aged under 20 and over 30. Marriage is frequently entered into at an early age.

16. With a declining - albeit still high - mortality rate and high and almost stable fertility, there will be a huge increase in the Malian population in the future if the above-mentioned trends continue. According to the demographic forecasts made by the competent departments, the total population will reach 10 million by the year 2,000.

17. Life expectancy at birth increased from 35 years in 1960 (34 for men and 36 for women) to 48 years in 1976 (47 for men and 51 for women) and 56 years in 1987 (55 for men and 59 for women). In 1994 it should reach 56.1 for men, 60.3 for women, giving an average of 58.5. Women account for 51.2 per cent of the total population. According to the 1987 census, women of reproductive age, i.e. those aged between 15 and 44, accounted for 19.76 per cent of the total population and 38.59 per cent of the female population; 48.34 per cent of the population were under 15 years of age, 45.59 per cent were aged between 15 and 59 and 6.07 per cent were aged 60 or over.

18. Households headed by women account for 12.2 per cent of the population.

19. The following table shows the distribution of the population and its structure by age and by sex.

Table 1: Distribution of the population by age group and by sex

Age group	Men	Women	Total	Percentage
Under 1 year of age	188 200	178 935	367 135	4.07
1-4	703 902	672 397	1 376 299	15.27
5-14	1 335 978	1 324 637	2 660 615	29.52
15-44	1 548 772	1 756 301	3 305 073	36.67
45-59	365 841	402 803	768 644	8.53
60 years or over	262 522	272 570	535 092	5.94
Total for Mali	4 405 215	4 607 643	9 012 858	100.00
Percentage	(48.88%)	(51.12%)	(100%)	

Source: National Department of Statistics and Informatics (DNSI), "Perspectives for the total urban and rural population of Mali, 1987-2002", August 1992 (scenario 2).

20. The urban population was estimated at 22 per cent and the rural population at 78 per cent (1997).

21. The literacy rate was estimated at 18.76 per cent in 1987.

C. Socio-economic indicators

22. Mali has substantial resources whose exploitation may serve as a basis for its economic and social development.

23. Agriculture is the main source of revenue for about 80 per cent of the population. On average, 2 million hectares are cultivated every year, including 96 per cent for dry culture. Agriculture provides 80 per cent of calories and 70 per cent of proteins consumed, and accounts for 25 per cent of GDP.

24. The main crops are:

Cotton: Production is steadily increasing (345,891 tons in 1994/95) and accounts for 59 per cent of the total value of exports (current agricultural survey, 1994/95).

Rice: Rice growing absorbs 40-50 per cent of investment in tne agricultural sector; thus more than 110,000 hectares have been developed and numerous small depressions are being exploited in the context of rural management. Available production in 1994/95 was 432,214 tons as compared with 384,848 tons in 1993/94.

Groundnuts: This cash crop played an important role after independence, but there was a considerable decrease in production following the fall in international prices. As a result of the devaluation of the CFA franc, however, groundnut production is beginning to pick up again.

It should also be emphasized that market gardening is becoming increasingly important.

25. Livestock breeding accounts for 11 per cent of GDP and 35 billion CFA francs in export earnings (18 per cent of Mali's total exports). Livestock suffered severely in the droughts of 1972/73 and 1983/84, but herds have gradually grown again and are now at their pre-1970 levels.

Table 2: Composition of livestock before 1994 and at the end of 1994

Type	Before 1994	End of 1994
Cattle	5 092 132	5 441 689
Sheep	4 465 202	5 172 492
Goats	6 430 687	7 379 976
Horses	75 816	101 252
Asses	574 328	611 746
Camels	183 067	259 455
Pigs	60 750	62 772

26. The total number of chickens is estimated at 22 million.

27. Products of animal origin are listed below:

Meat: 25,728.67 tons in 1994 (controlled slaughter);

Milk: 1,061,563.3 tons (source National Livestock Breeding Department (DNE));

Eggs: production is mainly in the vicinity of the towns where modern poultry farming facilities exist;

Hides and skins: exports amounted to 57,169.24 tons in 1994 (source: DNE).

D. Forestry, wildlife and fishery resources

28. The forestry sector accounts for 2 per cent of the formation of GNP. The volumes of standing trees are estimated at 530 million m³, with an increase of 37 million m³/year (shea tree: 188,000 tons/year; gum arabic: 210,000 tons/year; bee keeping: 1,900 tons of honey).

29. Wildlife resources consist of approximately 70 recorded species of mammals.

30. Fishery resources are fairly substantial and are exploited by traditional fishermen; annual production amounts to 100,000 tons.

31. At current prices, the GDP increased from CFAF 642.4 billion in 1989 to CFAF 973,716 billion in 1994 and CFAF 1,087,964 billion in 1995. The increase in GDP was thus 2.3 per cent in 1994 and 6 per cent in 1995, or an average rate of 3 per cent over the period 1994-95. This nevertheless reflects a deterioration in the living conditions of the population, which is growing at a rate of 3.7 per cent a year.

32. Control of inflation is one of the positive results of the implementation of the economic reform programmes. Before the devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994, the inflation rates were -2.4 per cent in 1989 and -4 per cent in 1992. With devaluation it rose to 34.1 per cent in 1994 and 12.5 per cent in 1995 taking account of the deflator for GDP.

33. The rate of economic growth in real terms was about 6 per cent in 1995. It should be noted that the 50 per cent devaluation of the CFA franc in January 1994 disrupted economic operations at that time, but the consequences have been properly controlled and managed with the result that the gains achieved have improved the country's economic prospects.

34. The change in parity was conceived as an external adjustment of the economy, one of whose expected effects is the significant improvement in the overall situation and the re-establishment of the major macro-economic balances. Despite these positive results, however, the effects of the devaluation are being strongly felt by households.

35. Trends in public finances show a distinct improvement in the balance of current operations as a result of the stabilization efforts made in the context of the adjustment programmes. In 1995, as a result of efforts to increase revenue on a durable basis and exercise stricter control over expenditure, the overall budgetary deficit (on the basis of commitments and excluding grants) was reduced to 10.5 per cent of GDP as opposed to 13.7 per cent in 1994.

36. The debt burden is a source of concern. In 1994, it stood at 147 per cent of GDP and its service at 43 per cent of budgetary revenue and 31 per cent of export earnings.

37. Unemployment among young people is a very disturbing problem in Mali. The proportion of young people under the age of 20 is estimated at 70 per cent

of the population, most of them living in rural areas. Economically active persons account for 44.7 per cent of the population, or about 4 million individuals. The primary sector employs 80 per cent of economically active persons, the secondary 9 per cent and the tertiary 11 per cent. Women account for 37.67 per cent of this active population and dominate the traditional sectors of handicrafts and commerce. They mostly work in the informal sector, which employs 15.86 per cent of the active population.

II. GENERAL POLITICAL STRUCTURE

38. Mali is a land of outstanding ancient civilizations and has seen the growth, peak and decline of several successive empires and kingdoms: the empire of Ghana, Mali, Songhoy and the kingdoms of Macina, Kénédougou, Kaarta, Ouassoulu, Ségou, etc.

39. Mali acceded to independence in 1960, thereby ending France's colonial domination. In 1968, a military coup d'état brought to power a number of young officers who were members of the so-called Military Committee for National Liberation. Following internal struggles, the Committee broke up and from its ruins a single party, the Democratic Union of the Malian People, was formed.

40. In 1991, as a result of a popular uprising and the activities of several democratic associations to combat the single-party and arbitrary system, the single-party regime came to an end. A Transitional Committee of Public Safety was installed and a transitional Government formed. These two institutions which emerged directly from the revolution of 26 March 1991 have governed the country and set in train the process that was to lead to democratic elections and the establishment of full democracy.

41. A new Constitution was adopted by referendum on 12 January 1992 and instituted the Third Republic. This Constitution represents the definitive establishment of the rights and freedoms of the individual within a democratic and progressive society. Local, general and presidential elections have been organized, and the institutions of the Republic have been established. Mali is currently headed by a President of the Republic elected by universal suffrage, a Government, a National Assembly and an independent judiciary. Other institutions such as the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court of Justice, the Supreme Council of the Communities, and the Economic, Social and Cultural Council have been established to ensure the proper functioning of the rule of law and to serve as guarantors of the democratic achievements.

42. The Constitution defines the powers and organizes the mechanisms, responsibilities and areas of competence of the various institutions. The executive power manages the affairs of the nation and is responsible to the National Assembly, which enacts legislation. The judiciary is the guarantor of individual freedoms and is independent. The fundamental principle of the organization of power since the establishment of the Third Republic has been that of the separation of powers.

III. GENERAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH HUMAN RIGHTS ARE PROTECTED

43. Mali is a State that is resolutely attached to democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. The Constitution, together with the other legislation, establishes a number of institutions and structures for the protection and promotion of human rights. Thus, Mali has authorities which ensure the equality of citizens before the law, equality of access to its courts, impartiality in decision-making, etc. The organization of the judiciary enables the independence of judges to be guaranteed and citizens to have adequate remedies and measures for protecting their rights against arbitrary or impartial action.

44. Apart from the courts, there are several non-governmental organizations and human rights associations, both national and international, which conduct their activities with complete independence in Mali. These include the Malian Human Rights Association, the Malian Association of Jurists, the Malian Section of Amnesty International, the Committee for Action and Defence of the Rights of the Child and Women, the Association for the Protection of Women, the Malian Women's Collective, the Organization for the Defence of the Rights of the Child and Women, the African League of Human Rights, and the Coordinating Organization for Women's Associations and NGOs.

45. The Government itself encourages such initiatives and supports all action aimed at the protection of human rights in Mali. It is in this context that the creation and institutionalization of the forum for democratic discussion should be viewed; it is held on 10 December of every year, Human Rights Day. It is attended by representatives of civil society and human rights organizations and provides a means of questioning members of the Government about the state of human rights in Mali during the previous year.

46. The media are very active, thanks to the creation of 42 radio stations throughout the country.

47. Generally speaking, since the inception of the Third Republic, there has been a considerable increase in forums for freedom of action and mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights, such as, for example, the establishment of the Higher Council on Communication and the Committee for Equal Access to the Media.